

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L MOSCOW 15243

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SUBJECT: JEWISH NEW YEAR AT THE KIEV SYNAGOGUE

REF: MOSCOW 15157

1. EMBWIFE AND HER SISTER WITH HUSBAND FOUND SAME FREE AND EASY ATMOSPHERE AT SEPT 27 NEW YEAR'S SERVICES IN KIEV SYNAGOGUE THAT PREVAILED IN MOSCOW. THEY ESTIMATED ABOUT THREE HUNDRED PEOPLE WERE PRESENT TOWARD END OF SERVICE, WHEN THEY ARRIVED, AND STREETS AROUND SYNAGOGUE WERE ANIMATED WITH PEOPLE COMING AND GOING. THERE WAS NO OVERT POLICE PRESENCE, AND JUDGING BY OPENNESS WITH WHICH PEOPLE APPROACHED AND TALKED TO THEM THERE SEEMED TO BE NO COVERT PRESENCE EITHER. MEN CAREFULLY WRAPPED THEIR RITUAL GARMENTS IN PAPER WHEN OUTSIDE TEMPLE, HOWEVER. ALTHOUGH OLDER PEOPLE PREDOMINATED, WORSHIPPERS WERE OF ALL AGES AND STATIONS; ONLY PERSON WHO SEEMED INHIBITED IN CONTACT WITH VISITORS, TO THE POINT OF CROSSING STREET TO AVOID IT, WAS ALSO THE WOMAN MOST STYLISHLY DRESSED, IN WESTERN SENSE.

2. VISITORS WERE OFFERED MATZOH FROM LAST YEAR'S BAKING, AND TAKEN TO OUTBUILDING BEHIND SYNAGOGUE TO VIEW SMALL MATZOH OVEN, CURRENTLY UNDER REPAIR. QUES-
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TIONS ABOUT DURATION AND CHARACTER OF REPAIR, HOWEVER,

EVOKED UNANIMOUS ASSURANCES THAT PROBLEM IS IN FACT
TECHNICAL: THE OVEN IS BEING CONVERTED TO ELECTRICITY.

3. QUESTIONS ABOUT STATUS OF WORSHIP AND EMIGRATION,
SIMILARLY, MET WITH APPARENTLY GEUINE INCOMPREHENSION
AS TO WHAT PROBLEMS QUESTIONERS HAD IN MIND: LOCALS
CLAIMED THEY HAVE NOT SUFFERED FROM RESTRICTIONS ON
WORSHIP, AND THAT ALMOST ALL KIEV JEWS APPLYING TO
EMIGRATE EVENTUALLY RECEIVE PERMISSION. ASKED ABOUT
HEBREW SCHOOLS FOR THE CHILDREN, CONGREGATION'S BOOK-
KEEPER, A WOMAN, SAID HER OWN CHILD WAS STUDYING WITH
A RABBI IN MOSCOW, AND EATING WITH FAMILIES WHO
RECEIVED HIM AS A MITZVAH, IN TRADITIONAL FASHION.
SHE CLAIMED THERE ARE 200,000 JEWS IN KIEV.

4. COMMENT. WHILE WE DO NOT HAVE BENCHMARKS FROM
PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE TO JUDGE CHANGES IN AUTHORITIES'
TREATMENT OF NEW YEAR IN KIEV, AS WE DO IN MOSCOW
COINCIDENCE OF TOLERANT TREATMENT IN THE TWO CITIES, THIS YEAR
AT LEAST, IS STRIKING. AT THE SAME TIME OF COURSE MOST
SYNAGOGUE-GOERS IN KIEV (AS IN MOSCOW) ARE OLDER
PEOPLE, LITTLE LIKELY TO BE WILLING TO CRITICIZE THE
SYSTEM OR TO COMPLAIN--ESPECIALLY TO FOREIGNERS. OUR
DISSIDENT SOURCES, MANY OF THEM FROM KIEV, OR WITH
CLOSE TIES IN THAT CITY, REPORT THAT ANTI-SEMITISM IS
ALIVE AND WELL THERE, AND WE ARE TOLD THAT THE UKRAINIAN
AUTHORITIES TEND TO TREAT JEWS WORSE THAN THE RUSSIAN
ONES.
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